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ABSTRACT

High quality African American literature exposes young children to accurate and realistic images of Black people and can be used to enhance any early childhood education program. This bibliography annotates over 40 examples of African-American children's literature for use with young children. The selections are a combination of poetry and fiction covering a wide range of topics, emphasizing strong family relationships. A sample lesson is provided to illustrate how such books can be extended to provide meaningful activities throughout the curriculum. (JPB)

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In Black and White: Fostering Cultural Awareness with African-American Children's Literature

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In Black and White: Fostering Cultural Awareness

with African-American Children's Literature

Traditionally, literature written and illustrated for young children has either completely omitted or misinterpreted the history, customs, and traditions of African-American peoples by presenting stories told through the eyes of the dominant culture. Due to these omissions and misinterpretations, many young children are not provided with opportunities to see accurate depictions of Black people or chances to develop positive opinions concerning the diversity that exists in our society.

High quality African-American literature exposes young children to accurate and realistic images of Black people and can be used to greatly enhance the caliber of any early childhood program. This literature promotes a positive self-image and reinforces the heritage of African-American children while providing all children with realistic pictures of African-American peoples and valid information concerning their history, customs, and traditions.

The following bibliography provides the annotations of over forty notable examples of African-American children's literature recommended by the authors for use with young children. The selections are a combination of poetry and fiction covering a wide range of topics but emphasizing strong family relationships. In addition, a sample lesson is provided to illustrate how such books can be extended to provide meaningful activities through-out the curriculum.

An Annotated Bibliography of African-American Children's Literature

Adoff, Arnold. **Hard To Be Six**. (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1991) A six-year old boy who wants to grow up fast learns a lesson about patience from his grandmother.

Bogart, Jo Ellen. **Daniel's Dog**. (Scholastic, 1992) A young black boy adjusts to the arrival of his new baby sister with the help of his imaginary dog, Lucy.

Bradby, Marie. **More Than Anything Else**. Illus. by Chris K. Soentpiet. (Orchard Books, 1995) This book presents a fictionalized account of nine-year-old Booker T. Washington's experience working with his father and brother in the saltworks of West Virginia and dreaming of the day when he'll be able to read.

Bunting, Eve. **Flower Garden**. Illus. by Kathryn Hewitt. (Harcourt Brace, 1994) A young, African-American girl and her father prepare a blooming, birthday surprise for her mother.

Bunting, Eve. **Smoky Night**. Illus. by David Diaz. (Harcourt Brace, 1994) The story of a young boy and his mother's experience during the Los Angeles riots is described in this Caldecott winning book.

Caines, Jeanette. **Just Us Women**. (HarperTrophy, 1984) A young girl and her favorite aunt share the excitement of planning a very special car trip for just the two of them.

Carlstrom, Nancy White. **Wild, Wild Sunflower Child Anna**. Illus. by Jerry Pinkney. (Aladdin, 1991) While spending a day exploring outdoors, Anna revels in nature's simple joys -- sun, sky, grass, flowers, frogs, ants, and beetles.

Clifton, Lucille. **Everett Anderson's Goodbye**. Illus. by Ann Grifalconi. (Henry Holt, 1988) A boy's feelings as he tries to accept his father's death are revealed through this moving story.

Coker, Deborah Conner. **I Like Me!** Illus. by Keaf Holliday. (Golden Press, 1996) Nia likes her bright sunshine smile, long legs and fingers, and many plans and ideas.

Dragonwagon, Crescent. **Half A Moon And One Whole Star**. Illus. by Jerry Pinkney. (Aladdin, 1990) The summer night is full of wonderful sounds and scents as Susan falls asleep.

Eisenberg, Phyllis Rose. **You're My Nikki** Illus. by Jill Kastner. (Puffin, 1995) When Nikki's mother starts a new job, she fears she will be forgotten. This beautifully written book reassures children that love has no boundaries and is especially valuable to children whose mothers are just beginning to work away from home.

Falwell, Cathryn. **Feast for 10**. (Clarion, 1993) The numbers from one to ten are presented as a family shops for groceries and prepares a meal together.

Feelings, Tom. **Daydreams**. Illus. by Eloise Greenfield. (E. P. Dutton, 1993) Pictures of children beautifully enhance a text which emphasizes daydreaming and wishing in our lives.

Fitzgerald, Elizabeth Howard. **Aunt Flossie's Hats (And Crab Cakes Later)**. Illus. by James Ransome. (Clarion, 1995) Sara and Susan share tea, cookies, crab cakes, and stories about hats when visiting their favorite aunt on Sunday afternoon.

Flournoy, Valerie. **The Patchwork Quilt**. Illus. by Jerry Pickney. (Dial, 1985) Using scraps from the family's old clothing, Tanya helps her grandmother create a lovely quilt that tells her family's history.

Greenfield, Eloise. **Grandpa's Face**. Illus. by Floyd Cooper. (Philomel, 1988) After seeing her beloved grandfather making a mean face while he rehearses for one of his plays, Tamika is reassured of his love for her.

Greenfield, Eloise. **Honey, I Love**. Illus. by Jan Spivey Gilchrist. (Haperfestical, 1995) Using repetition, rhyme, and rhythm this beautifully illustrated poem describes a young girl's favorite things.

Greenfield, Eloise. **Africa Dream**. Illus. by Carole Byard. (Harper Trophy, 1977) In this 1978 Coretta Scott King award winner, a child's dreams are filled with images of the people and places of Africa.

Greenfield, Eloise. **Honey, I Love and Other Poems**. Illus. by Diane and Leo Dillon (HarperTrophy, 1986) This collection of 16 poems, including "Harriet Tubman," "I Look Pretty," "Fun," "By Myself," and "Riding on the Train," tell of love and the simple joys of everyday life as they are seen through the eyes of a child.

Grimes, Nikki. **Something On My Mind**. Illus. by Tom Feelings. (Dial, 1995) This book is compiled of beautifully illustrated poems that express the hopes, fears, joys, and sorrows of young African-American children.

Havill, Juanita. **Jamaica and Brianna**. Illus. by Anne Sibley O'Brien. (Houghton Mifflin, 1993) In this sensitive tale of friendship and teasing these two girls exchange mean remarks before they clear the air and make-up.

Havill, Juanita. **Jamaica's Find**. Illus. by Anne Sibley O'Brien. (Houghton Mifflin, 1987) Jamaica finds her conscious after finding a stuffed dog at the playground.

Havill, Juanita. **Jamaica's Blue Marker**. Illus. by Anne Sibley O'Brien. (Houghton Mifflin, 1995) Jamaica wasn't sorry to hear that Russell, the class brat, was moving away. But, by the end of the story, she has changed her mind.

Havill, Juanita. **Jamaica Tag-Along**. Illus. by Anne Sibley O'Brien. (Houghton Mifflin, 1996) When her older brother refuses to let her tag along with him, Jamaica goes off by herself and allows a younger child to play with her.

Herrron, Carolivia. **Nappy Hair**. Illus. by Joe Cepeda. (Knopf, 1997) While at a backyard picnic, Brenda's family uses the African-American call-and-response tradition to describe her curly, twisty, nappy hair. Brenda enjoy's her family's gentle teasing and basks in the glow of their pride.

Hill, Elizabeth Starr. **Evan's Corner**. Illus. by Sandra Speidel. (Viking, 1991) With his mother's help, Evan finds a special corner of his own in his family's crowded apartment.

Hoffman, Mary. **Amazing Grace**. Illus. by Caroline Binch. (Dial, 1991) Although a classmate says that she cannot play Peter Pan in the school play because she is a girl and black, Grace's Nana and Ma help her realize that she can do anything she sets her mind to do.

Hudson, Cheryl Willis. **Bright Eyes, Brown Skin** Illus. by Bernette G. Ford. (Just Us Books, 1990) A group of young African-American children enjoy the activities of a typical day at school.

Hudson, Wade (Ed.). **Pass It On: African-American Poetry for Children**. Illus. by Floyd Cooper. (Scholastic, 1993) Hudson provides a thoughtfully selected collection of illustrated poems that reaffirm the child's special place in the family and African-American culture. Langston Hughes, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Gwendolyn Brooks, Nikki Giovanni, and Eloise Greenfield are among the fourteen distinguished African-American poets featured in this book.

Johnson, Angela. **One of Three**. Illus. by David Soman. (Orchard, 1995) This book presents a series of candid reflections by the youngest daughter on her daily relationships with her two older sisters and family.

Johnson, Angela. **Tell Me A Story, Mama**. Illus. by David Soman. (Orchard, 1992) A young girl and her mother remember together all the girl's favorite stories about her mother's childhood.

Keats, Ezra Jack. **Peter's Chair**. (Viking, 1998) With his parent's help, Peter learns to handle the discomfort he feels when all of his things are being painted pink for his new sister.

Keats, Ezra Jack. **Snowy Day**. (Viking, 1996) Winner of the 1963 Caldecott Medal, this is the story of a small boy's experiences on a winter day depicted through beautiful watercolors and collages.

Keats, Ezra Jack. **Whistle for Willie**. (Viking, 1987) A child and his inner-city world are captured in colorful illustrations as he interacts with his dog.

Lillie, Patricia. **Floppy Teddy Bear**. Illus. by Karen Lee Baker. (Greenwillow, 1995) Lyrical words and expressive watercolors tell the story of how a new teddy bear causes family dissension until Mama finds a solution guaranteed to win the approval of big and little sisters alike.

Lillie, Patricia. **When This Box Is Full**. Illus. by Donald Crews. (Puffin, 1997) Beginning with an empty box in January, a child's odds and ends fill the container month by month detailing his activities throughout the year.

Mendez, Phil. **The Black Snowman**. Illus. by Carole Byard. (Scholastic, 1991) Through the powers of a magical "kente" a black snowman comes to life and helps young Jacob discover the beauty of his black heritage, as well as, his own self-worth.

Oppenheim, Shulamith Levey. **Fireflies for Nathan**. Illus. by John Ward. (Puffin, 1996) When Nathan's father was a boy, he loved catching fireflies. Nathan experiences the same boyhood joy when his grandparents teach him to catch fireflies with Daddy's jar.

Polacco, Patricia. **Chicken Sunday**. (Philomel Books, 1992) A young Russian girl and her two African-American "brothers" devise a plan to sell decorated eggs, so they can buy a special Easter hat to thank Miss Eula for her wonderful Sunday chicken dinners.

Ringgold, Faith. **Tar Beach**. (Dragonfly, 1996) A young girl dreams of flying above her Harlem home, claiming all she sees for herself and her family.

Scott, Herbert Ann. **Sam**. Illus. by Symeon Shimin. (Paperstar, 1996) Sam is told that he is too small to participate in activities with his brother, sister, and father. His mother, however, realizes that he needs his own special job and puts him to work helping her in the kitchen.

Shearer, Marilyn. **Adventures of Curious Eric**. (Joshua Storybooks, 1990) A young African-American child demonstrates concepts like "under" and "inside" with a surprise ending.

Shearer, Marilyn J. **Cinderella and the Glass Slipper**. (Joshua Storybooks, 1990) A beautifully illustrated adaptation of the popular folktale with African-American characters.

Extending African-American Children's Literature in an Early Childhood Classroom: A Sample Lesson

Book Used: The Black Snowman by Phil Mendez. Illus. by Carole Byard. Scholastic, 1989.

Through the powers of a magical "kente" a black snowman comes to life and helps young Jacob discover the beauty of his black heritage, as well as, his own self-worth.

Purpose: To illustrate that everyone has special characteristic and/or qualities that are determined by actions rather than skin color or appearance.

Materials:
construction paper
markers and/or crayons
scissors
glue
circle patterns

Activity:

Step 1: After making predictions based on the title of the book, the students will listen to the teacher read the story aloud with the purpose of identifying the things that make the black snowman special. Due to length, this book may need to be paraphrased for young children.

Step 2: Have the students retell the story citing the characteristics or qualities that made the black snowman special.

Step 3: The students will use multi-colored construction paper, markers/crayons, and circular patterns to create a colorful snowman of their own. Each snowman is to be engaged in an activity that reveals his special characteristic or quality.

Step 4: Have the students share their snowmen pictures with classmates. Discuss the many desirable attributes the snowmen possess and how an behaviors reveal his/her traits.

Related Books: Kente Colors by Debbi Chocolate. Illus. by John Ward. Walker & Co., 1996.

This book presents a rhyming description of the kente cloth of the Ashanti and Ewe people of Ghana that portrays the symbolism represented in its colors and patterns.

Ashanti to Zulu by Margaret W. Musgrove. Illus. by Leo & Diane Dillon. Dial, 1992.

The Dillons won their second consecutive Caldecott Medal for the stunning pictures in this alphabet book that depicts 26 traditions and customs of 26 African tribes beginning with the letters from A to Z.

Additional Activities: Discuss the origin of the kente cloth; examine the colors of the kente graphing each child's favorite; investigate patterns found in the kente; locate the Ashanti and other tribes on a map of Africa; discuss the importance of storytelling in various cultures; review fire safety rules; address the importance of recycling; observe the various states of water; write a story of the kente cloth's next adventure, recount the beauty of the "ugly" black snowman.